

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

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USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ACCRA 0435

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PGOV PINS PINT GH

SUBJ: DISCUSSION WITH NRC CHAIRMAN ACHEAMPONG: POLITICAL
EVOLUTION

1. SUMMARY: IN COURSE LONG, CORDIAL DISCUSSION WITH NRC
CHAIRMAN ACHEAMPONG JANUARY 22, AMBASSADOR FOUND HIM FIRM IN
HIS INTENTION DEVELOP GHANA POLICY ALONG LINES OF NATIONALISM
AND, AT SAME TIME, BEGINNING THINK SERIOUSLY ABOUT PLANNING FOR
EVENTUAL RETURN CIVILIAN RULE. ECONOMIC ASPECTS THIS DISCUSSION
REPORTED SEPARATELY. END SUMMARY.

2. AFTER CAREFUL REFLECTION I ASKED FOR APPOINTMENT WITH
COL. ACHEAMPONG, CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL REDEMPTION COUNCIL (NRC), FOR
GENERAL CONVERSATION. IN SPITE OF MEETING HIM BRIEFLY AT VARIOUS
CEREMONIAL OCCASIONS, INCLUDING RECENT SUCCESSFUL VISIT BY
ASSISTANT AID ADMINISTRATOR ADAMS, I HAD NOT HELD WIDE-RANGING TALK
WITH HIM FOR SOME TIME. AT MY SUGGESTION (BUT NOT INSISTENCE) HE
RECEIVED ME YESTERDAY ENTIRELY ALONE, AND FOR WELL OVER AN HOUR WE
HELD EXCEEDINGLY FRANK AND VERY FRIENDLY DISCUSSION. THIS TELEGRAM
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DEALS WITH GENERAL ATMOSPHERE AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS. ADDITIONAL

TELEGRAMS WILL TAKE UP ECONOMIC QUESTIONS.

3. IN RELAXED MOOD AND DISPLAYING QUIET CONFIDENCE, ACHEAMPONG TALKED AT VARIOUS POINTS OF OUR DISCUSSION ABOUT HIS OWN POLITICAL ORIENTATION. IN FIRST PLACE, HE REPEATEDLY PUT HIMSELF DOWN AS OPPONENT OF COMMUNISM, BOTH PERSONALLY AND FOR WELFARE OF COUNTRY. CLEARLY INFLUENCED BY FACT GOG HAD JUST CAUGHT SOVIET FIRST SECRETARY RED-HANDED TRYING TO SUBVERT GHANAIAN OFFICER (STORY BROKE IN GHANA PRESS TODAY, ACCRA 0418), ACHEAMPONG SAID THAT PART OF HIS TIMING OF JANUARY 13, 1972, TAKE-OVER WAS TO HEAD OFF PRO-COMMUNIST GROUP. (THERE IS, IN MY OPINION, BOTH FACT AND FICTION IN THIS ASSERTION, BUT PICONSIDERED IT QUITE INTERESTING THAT HE SHOULD SAY IT TO ME.) MOREOVER, HE NOTED THAT THE PRO-COMMUNIST INTERESTS WERE WAITING FOR PRESENT GOVERNMENT TOHWAKE SLIP WHICH THEY WOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF. FINALLY, WHETHER IN FOREIGN OR DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, HE REPEATEDLY AFFIRMED THAT HU DOCTRINE WAS GHANAIAN NATIONALIS. AT SAME TIME, IN HIS OWN CONVICTIONS AND POLICIES, HE LOOKED UPON UNITED STATES AS CLOSE AND LOYAL FIREND. IN THIS LATTER CONNECTION HE WENT OUT OF WAY TO THANK ME (AND US) FOR FRIENDLY UNDERSTANDING DURING FIRST TWO YEARS OF NRC GOVERNMENT. (I CONSIDER HIS CLAIM TO NATIONAL PATRIOTISM TO BE FULLY SUBSTANTIATED BY HIS ACTIONS AND TO BE FULLY CONSONANT WITH OUR INTERESTS IN GHANA.)

4. WE THEN MOVED FROM RECENT PAST TO LONGER-TERM FUTURE AND DISCUSSED RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE. ACHEAMPONG FIRMLY REJECTED THE TWO OBVIOUS EXTREMES, IMMEDIATE RETURN TO PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT AND INDEFINITE MILITARY RULE. HE DECLARED COUNTRY NOT READY FOR PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT, WITHOUT REAL RISK OF DIVISIVE FACTIONALISM. (I AGREE.) HE WAS EQUALLY FIRM IN NOT SUPPORTING INDEFINITE MILITARY RULE. (I WAS IMPRESSED BY HIS CATEGORIC STATEMENT.) TAKING ADVANTE OF RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT OF PLAN APPOINT 36-MAN ADVISORY COUNCIL, I COMMENTED THAT I, TOO, HAD BEEN THINKING ABOUT THIS DIFFICULT PROBLEM AND WONDERED IF ADVISORY COUNCIL MIGHT NOT PROVIDE GOOD FORUM TO BEGIN QUIET PLANNING FOR WHATEVER KIND OF TRANSOFRMATION OF GOVERNMENT AS SEEMED TO FIT GHANIAN SITUATION. TO MY PLEASURE, HE HAD IDENTICAL IDEA. AGREEING THAT WORK SHOULD BE DONE IN CAMERA, AND WITHOUT PUBLICITY THAT MIGHT AROUSE INCORRECT ASPIRATIONS, HE FELT COUNCIL SHOULD BEGIN STUDY OF PROBLEM. I NOTED

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IMPORTANCE OF INTELLIGENT LEADERSHIP SUCH ACTIVITY, AND HE SAID HE PERSONALLY WOULD BE APPOINTING TWO OF MEMBERS WITH THIS IN MIND.

5. COMMENT: I THINK ACHEAMPONG'S RELAXED WILLINGNESS TO THINK ABOUT CIVILIAN RULE STEMS FROM FOUR FACTORS: A GENERAL CONFIDENCE FROM HAVING GOTTEN THROUGH TWO YEARS SUCCESSFULLY; A SIMILAR CONFIDENCE IN HAVING NIPPED THREE COUP PLTS IN THE BUD

DURING THIS PERIOD; A RECOGNITION THAT HE CANT'S STAND STILL
FOREVER ON THE ISSUE, ESPECIALLY GIVEN THE PUBLICITY IN NIGERIA
ABOUT CIVILIAN RULE; AND A REASONABLY GENUINE DESIRE TO AVOID
PERPETUATION OF THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN CIVILIAN AFFAIRS.
IT SHOULD BE ADDED THAT THIS TREND WILL ONLY DEVELOP IF PRESENT
GOVERNMENT ABLE TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OF ITS ECONOMIC PROBLEMS
AND ACHEIVE REAL PROGRESS IN NEAR FUTURE.
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